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SO YOU WANT TO BE A SPY?
BY DANIEL GILMORE

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- RECENTLY, A ROOMFUL OF CLEAN-CUT YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WAITED FOR THEIR FIRST INTERVIEW IN A JOB APPLICATION PROCESS THAT PROBES INTIMATE DETAILS OF THEIR LIVES AND REQUIRES THEM TO PASS A LIE DETECTOR TEST.

IF SUCCESSFUL -- AND FEW ARE BELIEVED TO BE -- THE APPLICANTS ARE TAPPED FOR A WELL-PAYING ENTRY-LEVEL JOB WITH A SECRET ORGANIZATION THAT PROMISES A "CAREER OF CONSEQUENCE."

THEY WERE AMONG THE 150,000 TO 200,000 APPLICANTS A YEAR FOR JOBS WITH THE CIA, SAYS HERBERT SIMMONS, CHIEF OF AGENCY RECRUITMENT IN THE WASHINGTON AREA.

MANY WERE RESPONDING TO A NATIONWIDE CIA NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN AND OTHERS HAD BEEN APPROACHED BY CIA RECRUITERS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

TEN YEARS AGO, WHEN THE SINS AND INDISCRETIONS OF THE CIA WERE HAULED BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATORS, CIA RECRUITERS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN BESIEGED BY STUDENT MILITANTS.

BUT SURPRISINGLY, RECRUITING STILL CONTINUED BRISKLY EVEN THEN.

CIA SPOKESMAN DECLINED TO SAY HOW MANY PEOPLE THE AGENCY HIRES YEARLY BECAUSE THAT INFORMATION WOULD INDICATE THE SIZE OF ITS WORK FORCE. BUT THE APPLICATION PROCESS IS KNOWN TO BE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE.

CIA DIRECTOR WILLIAM CASEY TOLD A GATHERING OF FORMER INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS LAST WINTER THAT "DESPITE A DRUMBEAT OF MEDIA CRITICISM" THE AGENCY HAD MORE THAN 150,000 APPLICANTS IN THE LAST YEAR.

THE CIA, WHOSE WORK FORCE AT ITS HEADQUARTERS IN LANGLEY, VA., AND IN THE WASHINGTON AREA IS ESTIMATED AT ABOUT 25,000, IS LOOKING FOR THE CREAM OF THE CROP IN COLLEGE GRADUATES, SIMMONS SAYS. APPLICANTS MUST BE U.S. CITIZENS.

"DURING THE COMING SEMESTER, WE'LL BE VISITING SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES THROUGHOUT THE NATION. BUT WE REMAIN VERY CAREFUL IN OUR SELECTION BECAUSE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A SECRET AND UNIQUE AGENCY," SIMMONS SAID.

THE SCREENING PROCESS IS RIGOROUS AND CAN BE PROTRACTED.

"WE'RE SHOOTING FOR A 120-DAY AVERAGE SECURITY CHECK PERIOD," SIMMONS SAID, AND RECRUITERS NOW ARE APPROACHING JUNIORS IN COLLEGE TO START THE PROCESS EARLIER.

THE PERSONAL HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRES ARE FORMIDABLE AND FOCUS ON POSSIBLE CRIMINAL RECORDS, DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE -- ALTHOUGH PAST

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